



Posted by [Dan Whisenhunt](#) on March 8, 2013.

Happy birthday, Buckhead!



Sam Massell, center, former Atlanta mayor and current Buckhead Coalition president, received a service award during the event.

Drink up, Buckhead: it's your birthday.

Buckhead officially celebrated its 175th birthday on March 1 at a fundraiser sponsored by the Buckhead Heritage Society.

The venue was the Buckhead Theatre, in keeping with the tradition that everything in Buckhead should have "Buckhead" somewhere in its name. Attendees came to the event dressed to the nines, dining on sushi, steak and chocolate-covered strawberries, stopping to pose for pictures in front of a mockup of Irby's general store, the original Buckhead tavern.



Frank Maier, center, and wife Blanchette, right, enjoy the anniversary festivities at the Buckhead Theatre on March 1.

In 1838, entrepreneur Henry Irby built a general store and tavern at the intersection of Peachtree, Roswell and West Paces Ferry roads. The area that developed around it evolved into modern-day Buckhead.

Today it's Atlanta's wealthiest community, home to high-rises, mansions and retail. It also has some of Atlanta's worst traffic congestion, something that the Buckhead Community Improvement District has tried to address with improvements to Peachtree Road.

Buckhead Heritage's event raised money to help the nonprofit put together a master history plan.

"We at Buckhead Heritage are responsible for telling Buckhead's story, through signage, digital apps, tours, things of that nature," Buckhead Heritage President Wright Mitchell

said. "So your money tonight will go to further that program."

Mitchell recently completed a study of how the community got its name in anticipation of the event, revealing new details about the commonly accepted story. Irby didn't actually kill the deer and his business was more of a store than a tavern.

That may sound like trivial stuff to the outside observer, but the chroniclers of the community's story said the details matter.

Buckhead Heritage Executive Director Erica Danylchak said the event helped to raise awareness about the community's humble beginnings.

"It's a wonderful way to make people realize what a rich history this community has," Danylchak said.



Wright Mitchell, president of the Buckhead Heritage Society, who sponsored the fundraiser, says a few words.

It's an area that's awash in historic places, many from the Civil War.

While the birthday party cherished that history, it was the scene of present-day Buckhead power brokers mingling.



Don Rifenberg, front, left, and fiancée Mary Masi, right, intently scrutinize the "Looking at Buckhead: Our Story" exhibit, part of the community's 175th anniversary celebration held on March 1 at the Buckhead Theatre.

Council members and Coca-Cola Co. execs shared space with neighborhood representatives and nonprofit leaders.

Buckhead Coalition President Sam Massell, who is also a former Atlanta mayor, received a service award for his work within the community. Massell co-chaired the event, along with Aaron's Inc. founder Charlie Loudermilk, who was unable to attend.

Harriet Kirkpatrick received an award for her volunteer work cleaning up Mt. Olive Cemetery near Frankie Allen Park. Blue Heron Nature Preserve Executive Director Nancy Jones received the Heritage Society's preservation award.

Buckhead Community Improvement District Executive Director Jim Durrett looked over a display of historic photographs and reflected on the significance of the milestone.

"It's a great opportunity to step back and take stock of where you are and where you've been," Durrett said. "Because without understanding that, it's kind of hard to understand where you need to go."

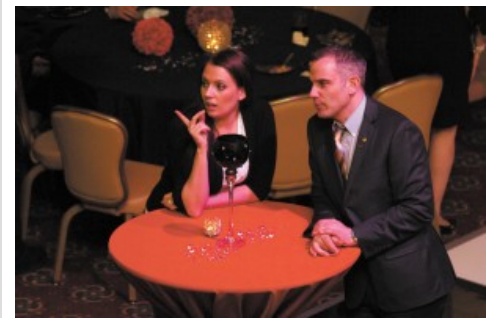
Roberty Lacey, who grew up in the area, said Buckhead has always been an essential part of the city.

"The great thing about Atlanta is, it's always open to reinventing itself and Buckhead is always at the heart of it," Lacey said.

Buckhead Council of Neighborhoods Chairman Jim King said, "it's a privilege to play a role in the community."

"When I think of Buckhead, I think of a community of faith,"

King said. "I think of a neighborhood that works together. It's a very collaborative community and everybody strives to be the best."



Audrey LeGrand, left, and Brian Farkas chat.

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17
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Lee Sechler · Top Commenter

My family moved to Buckhead (then the Buckhead Section of Atlanta. I know we were Atlanta with an address of Atlanta 24, Gerorgia) It was a great place to grow up. The history is gone, some homes are preserved as is some of the culture, but the hungry city of Atlanta failures at government have raped the area. Sad to me.

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